

in Eastern Europe, but France concluded treaties of mutual guarantee with Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Council of the League was to decide whether the *casus faderis* arose, except when unprovoked aggression rendered immediate action necessary. In defending his handiwork Chamberlain claimed that the treaty threatened nobody and was based on the principle of equality, England and Italy undertaking the same obligations to Germany as to France and Belgium. All the agreements harmonized with the spirit and reinforced the authority of the League. The British Government avoided automatic belligerence as it retained the right to decide whether immediate danger had arisen.

The essence of the transaction was the unforced recognition by Germany that Alsace and Lorraine had passed into the permanent keeping of France. The existing frontiers between France and Germany, -and Belgium and Germany, were accepted by all three states, and were guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy. We bound ourselves to assist either France or Germany against the unprovoked aggression of the other : what constituted aggression was to be decided by the guarantors. The treaty had no time limit, but it contemplated the ultimate transfer of the responsibility for the *status quo* to the League. On paper it was the most onerous burden we ever assumed, for it hypothetically pledged us to intervene in another terrible struggle. Moreover, it contained no reference to the reduction of armaments. France gave us no reciprocal guarantee against German aggression, and the Dominions declined to share the burden. Yet the pact was acclaimed by British opinion, which realized that it rendered another Franco-German conflict more improbable. It had often been argued that the world war would have been

avoided had
Vienna and Berlin felt certain that we should
intervene if
France were attacked. This uncertainty was
now removed.
Thus the treaty obligation seemed to most
Englishmen to
diminish rather than to augment our risks, for
the absence
of such a commitment in no way ensured our
neutrality. It
was indeed almost an axiom that we should once
again stand
by France if she were attacked, in accordance
with the principle
that her overthrow would endanger our safety.
If the acceptance of definite obligations in
Western Europe
was applauded by British opinion as a whole,
the refusal to
extend our responsibilities was equally
approved. It was
natural that Poles and Frenchmen, united by a
fear of what